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17 February 1971

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17 February 1971

Central Intelligence Bulletin

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CONTENTS
PANAMA: US-Panamanian relations are threatened. (Page 7)
SOUTH KOREA: Pak illness (Page 9)
bootii Rokha. Tak Tilliess (Lage 3)

Approved For Release 2003/08/21 : CIA-RDP79T00975A018300030002-4

Next 7 Page(s) In Document Exempt

PANAMA: The arrest on 6 February of a minor Panamanian official, is now threatening US-Panamanian relations.

The government has charged that the official was lured into the Canal Zone by US narcotic agents and has termed the action intolerable. It has already begun to fan the flames of Panamanian nationalism and anti-Americanism. University students, anxious to resume organizational activity banned since the 1968 coup, are apparently hoping to gain government approval by protesting the US action.

Foreign Minister Tack indicated to the US ambassador on 15 February that it would be very difficult for Panama to retreat from its public position that the arrested man be returned. He threatened also that unless the US backed down, US citizens or soldiers caught with drugs would no longer be turned over to Zone authorities but would be jailed in the Republic.7

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Next 2 Page(s) In Document Exempt

17 Feb 71

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